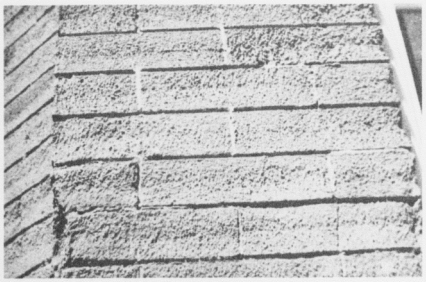

Figure 5. This brickwork was sandblasted to remove paint. Note the severe erosion which has occurred, especially in the softer center sections of this "hard burned" late 19th-century brick. Although this is a severe example, the same problem of increased roughness and porosity will occur even on more skillfully performed jobs where the effect is less evident visually.

minute pits on the surface of the masonry. This additional roughness actually increases the surface area on which new dirt can settle and on which pollutants can react.

Mortar joints, especially those with lime mortar, also can be eroded by mechanical cleaning. In some cases, the damage may be visual, such as loss of joint detail or increased joint shadows. Joints constitute a significant portion of the masonry surface (up to 20% in a brick wall) so this change should not be considered insignificant. In other cases, however, the erosion of the mortar joint may permit increased water penetration, leading to the necessity for complete repointing.

Other problems of mechanical methods have been mentioned in the discussion of project planning. In addition, wet blasting or water rinses can create the potential hazards of water methods.

Problems Of Water Repellent And Waterproof Coatings

Is waterproofing necessary? Coatings frequently are applied to historic buildings without concern for the requirement or the consequences of the coating. Most historic buildings have survived for years without coatings, so why are they needed now? Water penetration to the interior usually is not caused by porous masonry but by deteriorated gutters and downspouts, deteriorated mortar, capillary moisture from the ground (rising damp), or condensation. Coatings will not solve these problems. In the case of rising damp, in fact, the coatings will allow the water to go even higher because of the retarded rate of evaporation. The claim also is made that coatings keep dirt and pollutants from collecting on the surface of the building thus reducing the requirement for future cleaning. While this at times may be true, at other times the coatings actually retain the dirt more than uncoated masonry. More important, however, is the fact that these coatings can cause greater deterioration of the masonry than that caused by pollution, so the treatment may be worse than the problem one is attempting to solve.

Types of coatings: Masonry coatings are of two types: water*proof* coatings and water *repellent* coatings. Waterproof coatings seal the surface from liquid water and from water vapor; they usually are opaque, such as bituminous coatings and some paints. Water repellents keep liquid water from penetrating the surface but allow water vapor to enter and leave through the "pores" of the masonry. They usually are transparent, such as the silicone coatings, although they may change the reflective property of the masonry, thus changing the appearance.

Waterproof coatings: These coatings usually do not cause problems as long as they exclude *all* water from the masonry. If water does enter the wall, however, the coating can intensify the damage because the water will not be able to escape. During cold weather this water in the wall can freeze, causing serious mechanical disruption, such as spalling. In addition, the water eventually will get out by the path of least resistence. If this path is toward the interior, damage to interior finishes can result; if it is toward exterior cracks in the coating, it can lead to damage from the build-up of salts as described below.

Water repellent coatings: These coatings also can cause serious damage, but by a somewhat different mechanism. As water repellent coatings do not seal the surface to water vapor, it can enter the wall as well as leave the wall. Once inside the wall, the vapor can condense at cold spots, producing liquid water. Water within the wall, whether from condensation, leaking gutters, or other sources, can do damage, as explained earlier.

Further damage can be done by soluble salts. Salts frequently are present in the masonry, either from the mortar or from the masonry units themselves. Liquid water can dissolve these salts and carry them toward the surface. If the water is permitted to come to the surface, efflorescences appear upon evaporation. These are unsightly but usually are easily removed; they often are washed away by the simple action of the rain.

The presence of a water repellent coating, however, prevents the water and dissolved salts from coming completely to the surface. The salts then are deposited slightly behind the surface of the masonry as the water evaporates through the pores. Over time, the salt crystals will grow and will develop substantial pressures which will spall the masonry, detaching it at the depth of crystal growth. This build-up may take several years to cause problems.

Test patches for coatings generally do not allow an adequate evaluation of the treatment, because water may enter and leave through the surrounding untreated areas, thus flushing away the salt build-up. In addition, salt deposits may not cause visible damage for several years, well after the patch has been evaluated.

This is not to suggest that there is never a use for water repellents or waterproofings. Sandblasted brick, for example, may have become so porous that paint or some type of coating is essential. In other cases, the damage being caused by local pollution may be greater than the potential damage from the coatings. Generally, coatings are not necessary, however, unless there is a specific problem which they will help to solve. If the problem occurs on only a portion of the masonry, it probably is best to treat only the problem area rather than the entire building. Extreme exposures such as parapets, for example, or portions of the building subject to driving rains can be treated more effectively and less expensively than the entire building.

This publication has been prepared in response to Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," which directs the Secretary of the Interior to ". . . develop and make available to Federal agencies and State and local governments information concerning professional methods and techniques for preserving, improving, restoring and maintaining historic properties." It has been written by Robert C. Mack, AIA, Architect, Technical Preservation Services Division, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. November 1975.

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